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People With Disabilities And Their Families Will Benefit From Anonymous Monadnock Region 'Giving Circle' Gift

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DURHAM. N.H. -- People with disabilities and their families in New Hampshire will benefit from an anonymous gift from a group of people in the Monadnock region.

The "Gone Giving Circle," through the N.H. Charitable Foundation, recently awarded the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire a \$41,000 gift to expand its work in the state.

The Institute on Disability/UCED (IOD) at UNH was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

According to Mary Schuh, associate director of the institute, no one knows whom the people are who awarded the generous gift.

"I received a call from a man named Rick who said the Gone Giving Circle was interested in a potential gift," Schuh said. "He wanted to know, if someone were to make a donation, what would the institute use the money for. And he wanted the information within a couple of hours."

Giving circles are a type of "social investment club," whereby individuals join together to leverage their philanthropic efforts. In the same way that venture capital supports innovation in the business world, giving circles use a model of "venture philanthropy," infusing nonprofits with financial and intellectual capital. Joining or forming a giving circle provides individuals a hands-on opportunity to explore and collaborate with others who share the desire to make focused, social investments with impact.

Schuh went to work gathering a bit of history about the Gone Giving Circle to see where its charitable interests lie. She then put together a proposal with several ideas for potential funding.

Two days later, she heard that the organization had decided to award the institute \$41,000.

The first gift, \$10,000, will be used to expand the N.H. Leadership Series, one of IOD's cornerstone programs. It comes with a matching gift challenge.

The N.H. Leadership Series was launched in 1988 and has graduated more than 500 people. Through the program, individuals with disabilities and their families gain the knowledge and

skills necessary for advocating with service providers. They learn how to use the legislative process to achieve change, and how to organize communities to support inclusion. The Leadership Series enhances their ability to change laws, persuade schools and businesses to include individuals with disabilities, and educate communities about the importance of welcoming and including every member.

The Gone Giving Circle awarded the IOD an additional \$31,000 to use at its discretion. According to Schuh, the money will be used to develop and grow existing programs.

Schuh and IOD Director Jan Nisbet said that the Gone Giving Circle has made a lasting impact on the institute beyond the gift. It has encouraged IOD staff to begin their own giving circle.

“We have a history of fundraising and each year make a gift to an organization,” Schuh said. “But this year we decided to start our own giving circle. It’s a nice way to strengthen our internal community and each time we meet we will contribute a bit toward the pot.”